

The
OBEDIENCE
of
CHRIST



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THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

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THE BOY CHRIST

HOFFMAN

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

BY
HENRY C. SCHUYLER, S. T. L.
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION—OBEDIENCE..	I
CHAPTER	
I OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS.....	23
II OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE...	65
III OBEDIENCE TO GOD.....	108

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

THE BOY CHRIST.....*Frontispiece* ✓

PAGE

THE HOLY FAMILY..... 24 ✓

CHRIST BEFORE PILATE..... 78 ✓

THE BABE IN THE STABLE..... 122 ✓



INTRODUCTION

OBEDIENCE

EACH one of us possesses a free will. It is to God that we are indebted for this priceless gift, all the more precious because permanent. For in His goodness He has attached the quality of freedom so closely to the will that no power, not even His own, can separate the one from the other.

He who is all just, who is ever faithful to the decrees of His own free will, cannot take away from us what He has willed us to possess as our own. Much less is it possible for man to destroy or harm the freedom God has guaranteed to us. Men may conquer their fellow-man, make him a life-long slave, restrain the liberty of his

INTRODUCTION

physical powers, force him to act contrary to his will; but never, so long as he possesses self-conscious existence, can they take away from him the faculty of willing as he pleases; never can they oblige him to will what he is determined not to will. While the hand performs the hated task commanded by the master, while the back bends beneath the yoke of servitude, the will always possesses the power to rebel against the physical force that controls the body.

Perfect as is the freedom of the will, its possession is not for us a certain source of true happiness, either in this life or the life to come. It is a gift most precious in its power for good. It is also appalling in its self-contained possibility for evil. By means of the same power which enables us always to choose what is good, either for itself or as a means to a higher good, we are also given the opportunity of choosing that which is calculated to lead us into life-

INTRODUCTION

long habits of sin in this world, and a consequent unhappy existence in eternity.

And what makes the danger all the greater is the presence within us of certain natural inclinations towards evil which have a strong influence upon the will, without at the same time destroying its freedom.

The will is most delicately adjusted. A very trifling influence is able to attract it towards evil. The slightest loss of self-control, a momentary weakening of that spiritual grasp which keeps in restraint the restless passions of our lower nature, a passing shadow that obscures the vision of the soul normally viewing things by the light of God's grace: and, quick as a flash, the choice is made, the good is cast aside, sin is sought for because of the false happiness it promises, and our will's freedom becomes a curse for us instead of a blessing.

Great favors bring increased respon-

INTRODUCTION

sibility. Liberty of the will is an inestimable favor; its possession is fraught with the highest responsibility. Depending on our use of it is nothing less than the happiness or misery of our lot in the life to come.

God had a purpose in giving us this perfect gift, a gift that makes our wills, in a certain sense, like unto His own. The whole scheme of Redemption and Salvation presupposes the freedom of the will. We were created to give glory to God by freely seeking Him as our last end, by using our wills in such a manner that we might fit ourselves to be His companions in a future life. He has given us our liberty, desiring, but not forcing, us to use it in conformity with His will. In the words of Tennyson:

“Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours to make them thine.”

If we make them God's by willing only

INTRODUCTION

those things that please Him, we shall be fitted to live with Him; if we do not, we can have no part in His perfect happiness. It is for us to choose. What this choice should be, common sense leaves us no room to doubt. Every one admits the necessity of doing God's will. Yet when it comes to the practical test, it is very hard to give up our own wills, even in individual, isolated acts, not to speak of making a complete surrender of them and allowing ourselves to be guided in all important matters by the will of another.

And yet, unless we do make this complete surrender in all that intimately concerns our temporal and eternal happiness, we cannot be said to give our wills to God. And the surrender, when made, must not be a conditional, fitful one, now urging the will towards the things that are above, and a moment later permitting it to seek the things that are below, to be drawn downward by the deceitful beauty of evil.

INTRODUCTION

The choice we make should be continuous, steady, consistent; and it can possess these qualities only when it crystallizes into a habit or virtue. In order to be sure of giving our wills to God without reserve and choosing only those things that please Him, we must acquire the habit of following the guidance of His will as it is shown to us by His representatives, our superiors in family, civic or religious life; of following it not merely because we see that it is advantageous for us to follow it in this or that particular case, but principally because it is the will of a superior manifesting itself in various direct and indirect commands. This is the virtue of obedience. It is only by practicing this virtue that we give our wills to God, more or less completely in proportion to the greater or less facility with which we obey the commands of those who are the rightly constituted channels through which an all-wise Creator directs His creatures.

INTRODUCTION

Obedience, then, is the virtue by which we comply with the command of a superior, because it is a command. The latter part of this definition is of the utmost importance. To possess the virtue of obedience in its entirety, we must have the intention of fulfilling the superior's will, otherwise there is great danger that we might not submit to a command unless we see the advantage of obeying it.

If we are in the habit of rendering obedience to rightly-constituted authority principally because it is our duty to do so, we can be sure that our obedience will be steady and continuous. If, on the contrary, we do not possess this essential motive, it is very likely that many commands will be totally disregarded, or only partially complied with, simply because it will not seem necessary or useful for us to submit to them.

Did we not have the intention of obeying a command because it expresses the

INTRODUCTION

will of one who directs us, our obedience could hardly be classed as a special virtue. It would not endure very long, since it could not stand the strain of very many commands contrary to nature, unless fear of punishment forced us to keep within the letter of the law.

In thus speaking so highly of the motive or intention, that part of obedience which is invisible, we do not mean to underestimate the external visible act that is commanded. Without this there could of course, generally speaking, be no obedience. To do what is commanded, and to do it well, promptly, exactly, is the fruit, the final unfolding of the virtue. Still, unless the external act has as its foundation submission of the will and interior recognition of the command as a command, it is like Dead Sea fruit. Whatever beauty it possesses is merely external and short-lived, having nothing solid or permanent beneath it.

INTRODUCTION

Submission of the will is therefore of the utmost importance. The very life of the virtue depends upon it. But if we wish this life to be broad and deep and lofty, if we wish it to expand and grow stronger and more full of eternal possibilities, we must strive as far as we are able, to see the wisdom of the command given to us, to have our intellect as well as our will, in accord with the one who gives the command.

It is not absolutely necessary for us to do this in order to possess the virtue of obedience in its essence. Indeed, it is at times impossible for us to see the necessity or advantage of obeying certain laws. For our minds do not possess that freedom which our wills enjoy. They are naturally drawn to give approval of what is represented to them as true. And if, through limited intelligence, lack of necessary information, we cannot realize the advisability of doing a certain thing, it is impossible, while our

INTRODUCTION

state of mind remains unchanged, to see the command as it is seen by the one who gives it. In this case, if we submit to it against our judgment, we are without doubt practicing obedience, and indeed with added merit.

But it is very hard to be continually using the violence necessary to force the will to go against the reason, even though the latter be wrongly or insufficiently informed. Evidence of the internal struggle must eventually be seen on the surface, and the external acts by which we obey the command will not as a rule be performed so promptly and cheerfully as they might be.

But although we cannot force the mind to go against the evidence as it is presented to us; although we cannot make it place before the will a certain command as advantageous, when it can see no need for it, and perhaps suspects it to be dangerous, still we are able, by using the power of our

INTRODUCTION

free wills, to force it to look for reasons justifying the command.

If we are sufficiently humble, if we have a practical realization of how limited and imperfect our knowledge is, and how apt it is to be clouded by preconceived opinions, if we are willing to admit that a man is not always a capable judge in his own case, and that the presumption is in favor of the one in authority as better qualified to see whether the command is good for us or not, it will not be impossible, at least in most cases, to seek and find an explanation that will change our view of things and lead us to obey cheerfully an order that appeared at first most unreasonable.

If we could always bring our minds to see the advantage of obeying the commands given us by those in authority, we would have comparatively little difficulty in perfecting ourselves in the virtue of obedience. As a matter of fact, however, men are more prone to pick flaws in the laws that bind

INTRODUCTION

them, than to seek for reasons justifying them.

It cannot be denied that there are times when those in authority abuse the power lodged in them, and seek to curtail arbitrarily, and therefore unjustly, the liberty of those whom they rule. Naturally men seek to throw off this unlawful yoke. But if they do succeed in freeing themselves, they are very apt to become so intoxicated with their new-found freedom as to abuse it and go to the opposite extreme.

Impatient of all restraint they often degrade liberty into mere license to do whatever pleases them. As a result they find themselves falling into a state of lawlessness destined to bring about even worse evils than a condition of servitude. In our age the pendulum is slowly swinging to the former extreme. Personal, private utility, more or less exclusive of the general good, is growing to be the only, or at least the principal standard, by which many men

INTRODUCTION

measure the degree of submission they are willing to give to those in authority. Higher motives than self-interest are in grave danger of disappearing altogether as far as the vast majority of men is concerned.

Speak to people nowadays about seeing God in those who govern us, and they will laugh at you—or pity you. No doubt some of those who hold public positions are unworthy of the office they occupy. But yet, their inefficiency, or criminal self-seeking, does not weaken the force of that fundamental principle which we call heaven's first law.

There must be order in the world of rational beings, as well as in the inorganic world. Take away the perfect subordination of the different bodies of the universe, the admirable order that exists in the arrangement and motion of the earth and moon and the various stars; let one of these bodies refuse to obey the laws that govern

INTRODUCTION

it, if such a thing were possible, and the whole system would be reduced to chaos.

Man is no exception to the universal rule. So numerous are the relationships existing between him and his fellow-beings, that he cannot move outside a certain limited sphere of action, the sphere of law and order, without trespassing on the rights of another, without bringing disorder where order reigned before. Self-interest, then, even if he had in view only the happiness of this present life, should lead him to yield obedience when and where it is due.

How true is this also in his relationship with God, with the life to come. If unrestrained liberty is dangerous when there is question of attaining a temporary state of peace and contentment in this world, how much graver the danger when we are striving to gain an unending life of happiness in the world to come. In the former case a mistake involves penalties of a passing nature; in the latter, an error un-

INTRODUCTION

corrected leads to eternal misery. How much better it is to submit our God-given freedom to the direction of authority, both in temporal and spiritual matters. To obey with a proper motive, to see God in those who govern us, to submit our wills to His as revealed in those whom He has placed over us, with or without our concurrence; this is the only safe course of conduct for us.

To act thus is far from degrading. It is a free surrender we are making. We know that no man of himself has a right to be our master. The authority possessed by the one who governs us is not his own but comes from God. When we recognize this authority by yielding to it, we are in reality obeying God and looking after our highest interests in the best possible manner. The most intense selfishness could not prompt a purer, a wiser plan for advancing self-interests than this.

To give us an example; to prove to us

INTRODUCTION

that submission of the will is no degradation, the Son of God has taken human nature and lived a life of perfect obedience. He has entered into new relationships: with God as His father, to whom He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" with two human beings, Mary and Joseph, to whom "He was subject;" and with the civil authority to which he offered the most exact submission that any subject ever gave to his ruler, rendering unto Cæsar in every case "the things that belong to Cæsar."

His was a most exalted, most pure human nature. If perfect obedience could in no wise lessen the dignity of this human nature, not to speak of the Divine nature which existed side by side with it in the One Person who lived and worked and was obedient, how can we with our many failings, with our nature perfect only in its possibilities, hold that obedience is inconsistent with the highest form of freedom,

INTRODUCTION

or degrading to the natural dignity of man?

In obedience, as in the other virtues, we find our best model in our Divine Lord. Being true God and true man, He possessed a human as well as a divine will. Although these two wills existed in one and the same Person, they were independent of each other in everything that could limit the true and perfect freedom of the human will. The latter belonged to Christ to do with as He pleased. But He “did not please Himself,” because He came down from heaven, as He Himself tells us, “not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me.” He could not sin because the human nature assumed by the Son of God became incapable of sinning by reason of the fulness of grace acting efficaciously in the human soul of the God-man from the very moment the Word was made flesh.

Yet after all, this does not argue a lack of free will in our Master. For sin, as St. Thomas tells us, is rather a defect of free-

INTRODUCTION

dom, a sign, not an essential part of it; as disease is a sign, not a necessary constituent, of life. We could with no more reason argue that our Saviour did not possess free will, because He was unable to sin, than we could say a man did not possess vitality simply because no disease could afflict him so long as the various parts of his body fulfilled their functions perfectly.

As the presence of disease in the latter case argues imperfection, and its absence shows perfection; so sin in the former case would show an imperfect use of the will, while its absence denotes a perfect, and therefore a free, use of the will, because no will can act perfectly unless it is free.

No imperfection may be admitted in the human nature of our Lord. It had its limitations, it is true, but they were the limitations of a perfect human nature, which would cease to be human, and would

INTRODUCTION

become divine, if it were without some limitations, for only the Divine nature is infinite or without limit.

We could just as well say that the Divine Will is not free because it cannot choose evil, as maintain the absence of freedom in the human will of Christ simply because this will is without the defect that the ability to commit sin implies. Absolutely and intrinsically, the human will of our Saviour at all times possesses the freedom to act or not to act. This constitutes the essence of perfect freedom.

Often the Master speaks of doing the will of His Father. He refers to the expression of this will as a command, "As the Father hath given me commandment, so do I." And again, ". . . . as I have kept my Father's commandments." A command implies freedom on the part of the one who obeys, otherwise it is not a command in the true sense of the word. Moreover, the obedience which our Lord so clearly claims

INTRODUCTION

as the moving principle of His life could not be a true obedience, did He not possess perfect freedom of the will.

Often the Master speaks of doing the will Model for us in the practice of obedience. He performs the will of His Father in heaven, and that also of His mother and foster-father, and of other lawful superiors, with a true freedom, and not automatically, as a machine, impelled by an iron fatalism that would take away all merit from His actions, and from His life one of its primary motives—to serve in all things as our Model.

Without the quality of freedom, the example of our Saviour might indeed be most beautiful to look upon. But its beauty would be the cold, classic beauty of the marble statue, lifted above us, to be admired, it is true, but lacking that warmth, that human element, that sympathetic call to imitation, which could be possessed only by reason of an essential similarity to our

INTRODUCTION

nature, wide as may be the gap that stretches between us and the realization of our Ideal.

We are called upon to render obedience to at least three distinct classes of superiors: parental, civil and religious. Our Saviour's life teaches us many lessons in the obedience necessary to perfect these three relationships. We shall treat, therefore, of His obedience to parents, to the State and to God.

The Obedience of Christ

CHAPTER I

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

“And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth: and was subject to them.”—Luke ii, 51.

SO forcibly does the childhood of Jesus emphasize the reality of His sacred humanity, so touchingly and tenderly human is this phase of His life, that one must be sure in his faith and sincere in his love ere he venture to penetrate the privacy of the hidden life, and there gaze upon the divine Child and Youth of Nazareth, nestling as a babe in Mary's arms, playing with little children by the fountain, occupying Himself with the humblest of duties of daily life, working as a carpenter side by side with Joseph, and at all times yielding perfect obedience to His mother and foster-father.

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

But one whose motives are pure, who searches the secrets of the thirty years with the reverent gaze of a true Christian, need have no fear in picturing to himself in vivid colors and full details all the beautiful incidents of the Son's life in the home of His parents.

The public ministry of the Master is filled to overflowing with examples for our imitation; but few, if any, of them have a more forcible or a farther reaching appeal to mankind than the conduct of the Child Jesus towards Mary and Joseph.

The duties and trials of later life are graver and more arduous, it is true. Because of them we stand in absolute need of the support and direction given us by a Divine Model. But it is during the years of childhood and youth that there is the greatest need for the guidance of good example, especially the perfect example of a Divine Child. The virtues of the boy form the character of the man. If the early



THE HOLY FAMILY

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OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

growth of these virtues be dwarfed or ill-directed, the example of the Master will be followed but feebly in after life. How useful it is therefore, and how very necessary, to keep before the minds of children the example of all the virtues, and especially of obedience, given us by the Divine Son of Nazareth.

The effect of following this Model is evident in the more perfect relations of the child not only with his parents, but also with the civil and ecclesiastical authority. Obedience towards legitimate authority in Church or State is weak or strong, as a rule, in proportion to the obedience of the child to its parents.

In view of this fact, the importance of our Saviour's life at Nazareth cannot be overestimated, because it supplies a model of right conduct for every child, thus giving a primary and essential impulse to the formation of the good Christian, and, consequently of the good citizen of later years.

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

Without taking into account, for the present, the lesson of obedience taught us by the single sentence of St. Luke describing the relations of Jesus with His parents, "He was subject to them," and leaving aside the recorded manifestations of His filial affection, we can readily form an estimate of what His conduct as a son must have been from His views on the sacredness of the family, especially of the relationship between parents and children. We may make this inference without the least hesitation, because, being God, He must have always acted in a manner perfectly consistent with His principles as expressed by His teachings.

It is this relationship of parents with children which He uses to illustrate and explain the love our Heavenly Father has for us, and by implication, the love we His children should render Him in return.

When He takes this view, He gives indescribable nobility to the relationship be-

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

tween parents and children. He can think of nothing loftier in the natural order. It is the height of love that exists between creatures. And so, reaching this limit, and taking it as a form of comparison, He soars aloft to the supernatural, and strives by words well fitted for our feeble intelligence, to bridge over and explain the immeasurable interval between it and the love of an Infinite Parent: "What man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? Or if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent? If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Could we wish any more illustrious sanction of the natural affection between parents and children than this given by Christ Himself?

Later, in the tenth chapter of St. Matthew, we again find evidence of this same

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

lofty ideal of filial and parental love. Our Lord is seeking for words to express the nature of the love that men should have for Himself, and once more He uses the family as a basis of illustration: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."

He makes the sacrifice of family love the final and severest test of devotion to Him: "And every one that hath left home, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake; shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting." And in St. Luke we find a practical illustration of what our Lord demanded of those who would choose His immediate service. To one who wished to take leave of his family before following the Master, He speaks thus: "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

The natural affection of the Child Jesus,

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

could we consider this as acting by itself, would have been sufficient to ensure an ideal obedience to Mary and Joseph, because this natural affection must have been perfect in its own order, and perfect affection does not permit self-interest or caprice to interfere with the mutual relationship between the one who loves and the objects of this love; such an interference as takes place, for example, when a child's self-will causes disobedience, or his too great self-love causes a lack of respect for parents.

With us it is different. Even in the case of the most tenderly affectionate son or daughter, it is very possible that this filial love will weaken and permit an act of disobedience. Suppose that the father is an habitual drunkard. As the child grows older and more observant, it is not likely that mere natural affection will lead him to render the same exact obedience he would give to a model father. Or, to take an-

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

other case, filial affection can hardly stand the strain of continued neglect, and, perhaps, of violent abuse. If parents habitually ill-treat a child, his affection, at least in most cases, will be lessened in so marked a degree that it would form a weak and certainly insufficient motive for true obedience.

And then as the child grows up to young manhood or womanhood, self-interest and thoughtlessness are very apt to lead to disobedience, unless there is present some more powerful and permanent motive for obedience than natural filial affection.

What this motive is we can readily learn from the life of our Lord. His love for His parents was more than natural. It had, it is true, considering it from the human side, its foundation in the nature of Christ as man; but from the very beginning this natural affection had been raised to a supernatural state.

The Child Jesus loved Mary and Joseph with a supernatural love. All the elements

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

of a true, natural affection were present, without any of its imperfections. But in addition to these there was the element of grace. The love of our Lord for His parents led Him to see in them the two human beings who were closest to Him in the natural order. But it also led Him to see in them His divinely appointed guardians, receiving their authority over Him from His heavenly Father.

This it was that gave to His obedience the fullness and beauty and permanence that no merely natural motive could have afforded. He loved His parents with all the intensity of a pure, natural affection; but because this love was enriched by grace, that priceless element of supernatural love, there flowed from it the essential quality of respect, without which there can be no genuine, lasting obedience.

Only that child who sees in his parents the presence of an authority more than human, and who hears in their commands

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

a voice above the natural; only such a child will practice faithfully the virtue of filial obedience.

How plainly does our Lord emphasize the necessity of this respect, and its superiority as a motive for obedience over natural affection, when He submits Himself to Joseph as well as to Mary. "He was subject to them," to both Joseph and Mary, even though He could not have had, naturally speaking, the same filial affection for Joseph as He possessed in regard to His Blessed Mother, since Joseph was only His foster-father, and not His real father. And yet there can be no doubt that His obedience to the latter was just as exact as to the former.

It might be urged against this argument that Joseph was a model parent and never imposed any command that was not perfectly agreeable to the divine Child, and also that he never manifested any of those traits of selfishness and cruelty and neglect

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

too often characteristic of other, less saintly fathers; and that, therefore, the Child Jesus could not help showing him the respect he deserved to receive. Arguing along the same line, it might be said that our Saviour's affection and respect for His mother were just what we would expect as a return for her goodness and self-sacrifice.

But it must be remembered that the Son of Mary was God as well as man, and that at all times He was conscious of His Divinity and His infinite superiority over even the most perfect of human beings. Although many modern, non-Catholic writers on the Life of Christ hold the opposite opinion, there is not the slightest reason for denying that our Lord realized, even as a boy, that He was the true Son of God made flesh. For the Divine nature could not subsist side by side with the human nature and form one Person with it, without the human mind of Christ realizing this close union. The reality of His Divinity and the nature

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

of His Mission did not gradually dawn upon Him, but from the beginning were part of His knowledge, even as man.

And so the Infant in the arms of Its mother, the little Boy clasping the hand of Mary as He walked by her side, the Youth working with Joseph in the carpenter's shop, knew the immeasurable gulf that stretched between Himself and those whose commands He so perfectly obeyed. Even though the ones who gave the orders were the best parents the world could possibly contain, still there was an infinite humiliation in God becoming obedient to His own creatures, and practicing this obedience in all things, even the most trivial.

He who commands the universe, who could summon the hosts of heaven to do His will, is bidden by a creature to go on an errand, to carry a message, to help put in order the little home at Nazareth—and He does as He is told. He who causes the tree to grow is commanded by a car-

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

penter to form from its trunk a table or stool—and humbly He performs the task. The arm that sustains the world, now wields the saw and hammer at the behest of a father whose very command could not have been given without the help of the Child who obeys him.

Is there nothing wonderful in all this? And mark the manner in which the obedience is rendered—promptly and perfectly, cheerfully and humbly, no matter whether the task be trifling or important, laborious or easy. The Sacred Text tells us “He went down to Nazareth.” Down from Jerusalem, the great and holy city of Israel, to the humble village of Nazareth, a place held in contempt by the Jews; down from the temple with its pomp and magnificence, its gold and incense, to the house of Joseph and Mary with its poverty and obscurity; down from the midst of the Doctors of the Law who had been “astonished at his wisdom and answers,” to

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

the ignorant villagers who treated Him as they would treat the average boy of His years and position. And all this He did at the command of His mother and foster-father, who took Him away from the temple where they had found Him after a search of three days.

And at Nazareth He was "subject to them." This is the history of the next eighteen years. He "advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and man," but still He was subject to His parents. He has long since reached and passed the age at which children feel that they are freed from parental control; Joseph dies and Mary is left alone with her Son, upon whom falls the burden of supporting the little home; the early years of manhood are fast slipping by; He sees the fields ripening for His harvest of souls—but still He remains subject.

As the months and years go by, millions of His fallen brothers are plunging deeper

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

and deeper into the depths of unbelief and immorality. Souls are falling headlong to eternal ruin. Every moment adds its quota to the crimes that cry to heaven for vengeance. Every moment the faith of the chosen race itself is being sapped and eaten away at its very heart's core by the hypocrisy and proud self-sufficiency of the leaders of the people, those who are mightiest in Israel. And still the Son of God holds Himself aloof from those who so sorely need His message; still the Son of Mary yields obedience to His mother.

To the opportunist, to the man who looks only to the present and sees but the surface of things, this course of conduct seems foolish, if not worse than foolish. And yet the lesson taught us by these years of subjection and hidden life is a most important part of our Lord's plan for our Redemption and Salvation. It is the foundation of His life-work. The active ministry, the passion and death are, in the divine econ-

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

omy, built upon it, and need this all-sustaining basis for their future efficacy.

Men who were rushing into eternal ruin while their God and Saviour lived His hidden life of obedience, were not without sufficient means of saving themselves, did they but choose to make proper use of these means. The world had waited thousands of years for the coming of the Messiah. What are a few years more in the eternal life of God? If it were cruel to wait thirty years, what could we say of the many centuries' probation from the Fall until the opening of the public ministry of God's Son?

Obedience, then, is the principal lesson of the thirty years, and especially of the latter part of this period, when the Youth of Nazareth had become a Man. For there could be no natural reason for the Master's remaining inactive once He had attained the full growth and development of manhood, and was, therefore, even in the eyes

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

of those who recognized in Him no supernatural aptitude, sufficiently fitted for the performance of His Mission.

His life of retirement and subjection during the latter years serves to emphasize His purpose of inculcating the necessity of subjection and self-restraint. Being God, He was from the beginning fitted to take up His active work. In the eyes of the world He was prepared for this task many years before He began it. Yet He chose to remain at Nazareth, not to prepare Himself, but to teach us obedience.

It is true He teaches us other lessons by means of the hidden life. All the virtues are there present. But ever through the perfect and rich-toned harmony they form there steals the same, single theme—obedience. At every turn and every moment, we feel its persistent, pulsating rhythm, and hear its sweet but strong tones sounding clearly above the rest, and bearing to the depths of our hearts, in its fullest beauty

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

and power, the lesson of obedience and the value it possesses in the estimation of the Master.

But right in the midst of this harmony of the hidden life, with its predominant theme of obedience, there sounds forth a chord so strangely different, at first hearing, from what precedes and from what follows, that it seems like a dissonance to every heart save that which is attuned to the lofty, spiritual music of the Master's mission.

None save those who possess a deep, sympathetic appreciation of our Lord's purpose can grasp the mystic meaning of this brief episode of the thirty years that seems not only to lack the beauty brought to the hidden life by the note of obedience, but even to strike a positive discord by reason of an apparent lack of filial respect and affection.

We refer to the single recorded instance of our Lord's appearing in public during

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

His life at Nazareth—the journey to Jerusalem to assist at the celebration of the Pasch, when the Child, then twelve years old, leaves His parents without their knowledge and remains with the Doctors in the temple. This event is not spoken of here as affording an example of our Saviour's obedience to Mary and Joseph, for we readily admit that it does not directly illustrate the exercise of this virtue. Neither, on the other hand, is there anything in the Child's conduct on this occasion that would give the least ground for judging Him to be lacking in obedience. But beneath the appearance of disobedience and disrespect there lie hidden other lessons than those which inculcate the virtue we are discussing, lessons which we, with our limited intelligence, can but feebly grasp.

The twelfth anniversary of our Lord's birth has come and gone, and a great change has it brought into His life, so far as His position under the Law is concerned.

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

He has now attained His majority, has become a Son of the Law, subject to all its observances, particularly the various prayers and feasts. He must also from now on make the annual journeys to Jerusalem prescribed for every true Israelite.

As the Festival of the Pasch approaches, the members of the little family make their preparations for the first compulsory observance of this great event by their Son. Their neighbors, too, are getting ready for the journey. And early one bright spring morning, when the sun has barely risen above the hills that border their little village, the company of pilgrims starts forth southward toward the city of Jerusalem.

Slowly at first they pick their way down the narrow paths on the hillsides to the fertile plain of Jezrael that opens out so invitingly before them, its broad expanse of verdure dotted with flowers and watered by the Kishon with its many tributaries.

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

Reaching this plain their journey is less toilsome, their progress more rapid.

For three days the journey continues. For the most part the way is pleasant, winding through fertile plains and shady valleys. Here and there appear clumps of fig and olive trees. Overhead stretches the deep blue sky of the East. The sun's rays give generous promise of the coming summer. Birds fill the quiet air with a melody more joyful than usual, as if newer life were given to them as well as to Nature's mute offspring. Breezes from the West, from the sail-dotted sea, breathe gently on the cheeks of the pilgrims as they plod along. Their faces are bright and cheerful, reflecting the glory and peace of Nature. And no countenance is more serene and calmly happy than Mary's. Yet who can read the secret thoughts of her mother's heart as her glance rests upon the Child walking by her side, or turning to speak to a nearby group of pilgrims.

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

Years ago an old man had told her of a sword of sorrow that was to pierce her heart. Has she a premonition that this same sword may very soon bring days of keen anguish into her life, now for many years so peaceful and free from great sorrow?

As she looks upon Jesus, she feels that He belongs to her less now than before, that His position henceforth as a Son of the Law puts a new relationship into His life. Of His love for her she feels as sure as ever. It is in no way lessened, nor could it be, by any work the Saviour will be called upon to perform. Yet this new responsibility He has assumed fills her with a nameless dread. For it brings His mission forcibly to her mind, a mission that must at some time separate her from the One she loves most in heaven and on earth. When? Ah, it is the uncertainty of the dreaded time that brings a momentary pallor

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

to her cheeks, and causes a dull, heavy burden to press upon her heart.

Again and again, when the feeling comes upon her, she steals a glance of love at her Son, and the sight of His countenance and the sound of His voice bring a torrent of happiness into her soul. Still, the thought of the pain that has been prophesied will not disappear altogether from her mind. The natural love of a mother makes her long for a continuation of the past years of perfect happiness. But the obedience she has vowed to the Father, whose humble handmaid she still is, and the love she bears for the human beings the Son must redeem, steel her will and give the tranquillity of fortitude to her heart.

Many a mother, under different conditions, of course, has felt that same sense of pain at the thought of an impending departure from the parental home of a son or daughter who has become a part of her life. Many have felt this keen thrust of

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

sorrow's sword years even before the blow actually falls. Many, as they watched with loving pride the child grow up to young manhood or womanhood, have felt, at every new revelation of developing strength and beauty and grace, the thrill of happiness that filled their hearts strangely dulled by a throb of nameless pain. Many, thus feeling beforehand the agony of separation, have turned their thoughts backward and sought in the memory of past unclouded happiness a relief from the dread of future sorrow. Would that they could be strengthened by this recollection and not sigh vainly for a continuance of that life of union which is, after all, given to them only that they might help prepare their children for the real struggle of life. For this struggle demands, as a rule, even when there is no question of vocation to God's service, a practical separation of children and parents!

At the close of the third day. the pil-

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

grims, traveling at an ordinary rate of speed, would reach Jerusalem. Of what took place during the eight days of the Pasch we have no account, save that the Holy Family spent in that city the full time required by the Law, and then started with the other pilgrims on their return journey. And now occurs the striking event of this paschal pilgrimage: Jesus disappears. His parents lose all trace of Him.

How this could happen, notwithstanding the most loving and careful watch, Joseph and Mary kept over their Son, can easily be explained. There must have been present in the city for the Paschal celebration many thousand strangers. Unavoidable confusion would result at the departure of so great a number. Then, too, it was only natural that people in the same caravan would form at times separate groups, distinct from family divisions. Old friends and acquaintances who never met save on occasions of this kind would seize the op-

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

portunity for conversing with each other. The children, too, would very likely seek each other's company. And in view of the fact that the stopping places at night-time were always fixed beforehand, parents would feel no alarm at being separated during the march from the children who accompanied them, and who were old enough to be trusted away from immediate and continuous parental watchfulness.

Whatever may have been the manner of the Child's disappearance, of one thing we may feel sure: it was not the result of carelessness on the part of Mary and Joseph. And when in the evening they arrived at the place decided upon for the night's encampment, the alarm felt by our Blessed Mother at the loss of her Son was unmingled with any regret at not having watched over Him carefully enough.

At first the distracted parents seek for Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances, with ever increasing alarm as they

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

meet with the same lack of news from each of them. Then with heavy hearts, but hasty footsteps, they go through the whole camp. No result. It is too late to turn back now; they are forced to wait for the morning. How long the night must have seemed to them!

Early the next day they retrace their steps to the city, inquiring about Jesus from each group of travelers they meet. No one has seen Him. In Jerusalem they continue the search with no better results. Imagine the feelings of Mary. Never before had her Child been absent from her for so long a time. Almost constantly had He been with her in their home at Nazareth. Even the slightest separation had seemed to her an age; and always the sound of His returning footsteps had sent a new thrill of love through her heart.

Now for two whole days and nights she seeks the lost Son, asking everywhere concerning His whereabouts, going through

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

every street in the city. At length, on the morning of the third day, almost in despair, she goes to the temple: and there she finds her lost Child, "sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions."

It was in one of the outer halls of the temple that Jesus was found. The fact that He was permitted to be present there amidst the Doctors of the Law need not astonish us. It was customary for those who had attained their legal majority and who wished to become more proficient in the Law, to assemble in one of the large outer halls of the temple during the celebration of the great festivals, and there listen to the discourses of those who were authorized to teach. The auditors were either standing or seated on the ground. The Doctors occupied the seats. The asking of questions was encouraged, as it promoted an increase of interest, and also gave the Doctors a chance to show off their learn-

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

ing. Those of the audience who manifested an unusual knowledge of the questions under discussion were often invited to leave their places and take a seat with the Doctors.

When Mary comes into the hall, it is, as St. Luke tells us, in this place of honor that she finds Jesus seated, so marvellous is the knowledge of the Law manifested by Him: "And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and his answers."

Mary and Joseph in wonder stand gazing at their child. It is the mother who first speaks, and the words that come from her seem to imply a lack of respect and obedience, or at least of filial affection, on the part of Jesus, "Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." But Mary knows too well the love and sinlessness of her Child to be led even by the deepest sorrow into any feeling, however fleeting, that the Divine Boy could treat her in any way

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

other than as a perfect son would treat His mother. Nor would her speech, over which she kept so constant and careful a guard, convey a reproach that her heart did not feel, even though the words she uttered, viewed apart from the speaker and the circumstances, might appear to lend themselves to such an interpretation.

There is undoubtedly a note of complaint in the question. But it is the loving, respectful complaint of one whose heart has been rent by anguish at the three days' separation; of one who, while recognizing the perfect right of her Son to depart from her for as long as He pleases, still wishes it would be God's will that she could have Him with her always.

And is not this the perfection of love? Is it not what the true Christian strives for—an unending union with his Maker? Is not God pleased when we complain of His apparent absence from our hearts, when He withdraws His sensible consolation and,

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

to try us, leaves us without a feeling of His presence within us? Is it not a proof of affection when the spirit groans in the bondage of the flesh and longs for the time when it shall see no obstacle between it and the Being it loves? No, the words of Mary are not reproachful, not complaining in any sense that would imply a defect either in a mother's love or a Son's obedience.

And now we have another difficulty to overcome, another objection to answer, in the response of Jesus: "How is it that you sought me? did you not know that I must be about My father's business?" It is harder to explain these words, harder to show that the action of our Saviour in leaving His parents without telling them of His intention, and in permitting them to suffer so deeply because of His departure, is perfectly consistent with the true respect and obedience a son should have for his parents.

Not that there is, or could be, any doubt

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

that He acted as a dutiful son might act; but we have here to deal with a higher law that takes the place of the lower one. The Superior who appoints the subordinate now steps in, and for the moment assumes personally the direction He has delegated others to exercise. It is His right to do so, in view of the fact that in this case the Superior is God Himself, and that He has given to Joseph and Mary the guardianship of His Son with the understanding that it is to be a preparation for one great work, and that alone—the performance of the Father's business. It is not a case, therefore, of a conflict of rights, nor of the arbitrary withdrawal or suspension of an inferior's rights by a superior. Jesus ceases to obey His mother and foster-father solely because His eternal Father takes their place.

But why, we ask ourselves, did He not tell His parents that He was going to leave them for three days? Could not His obe-

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

dience to His heavenly Father permit Him to do this much, and thus relieve Mary and Joseph of the sufferings He foresaw they would undergo on account of His abrupt withdrawal from them?

We could just as well ask, why did He not permit Mary to die, as Joseph died, before His cruel death on Calvary? Would He not by so doing have lessened her sorrows in a far greater degree? We have here, in our Lord's apparent lack of loving forethought, an illustration of the mysterious manner of God's treatment of those whom He loves. The motives back of this conduct are fully known to Him alone. And who can search the mind of God, or discover His hidden reasons? He whom the Father loveth He chasteneth. Yes, and the measure of His love for His mother is the intensity of the sorrow she underwent with His knowledge and consent. He wished her to be the mother of martyrs in the true and full sense of the word; to give

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

to future ages an example of patient suffering in as high a degree as possible.

Did not the Child in the temple, as He thought of the agony His sudden separation was causing His mother, look into the hearts of all the mothers who were to grieve in the years to come by reason of the sorrow inflicted upon them, deliberately or otherwise, by their children? And did He not see how the example of Mary's perfect submission to His Father (an example which His action gave her the opportunity of offering) would lead millions of these sorrowing mothers to imitate her, and thus bear their anguish more bravely and with greater resignation to the will of God? This is one of the deep designs of God's providence that the Child's conduct at the paschal celebration partially reveals to us.

Turning to the words used by our Lord in explanation of His conduct, it is very easy for us to detect in them the note of perfect respect, even though the relative

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

positions of parents and Son are for the moment reversed, and the Child becomes the teacher. He reminds His earthly guardians that His principal business in this world is His Father's business, and that, although He has been, and will be for many years to come, subject to them, still for the past three days a higher duty called Him from them; and for the performance of this duty He was responsible to God alone.

Even when He gives His parents these words of instruction, implicitly announcing His independence of them, He does not forget their affection for Him and their deep sorrow at His disappearance, for the answer combines consolation with instruction. It is perfectly evident to our Lord that the reference to His higher duty will at once drive away from Mary and Joseph, perfectly submissive as they are to God's will, the sorrow that filled their hearts during His absence from them. He knows, too, that it will cause them to realize more

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

deeply their inestimable privilege of being the guardians of the Son of God, even though they now know that this guardianship might cease at any time when the Father's business called their Son away from them.

There is in these words of our Lord a lesson for other parents too. There are boys and girls whom God has especially called to assist in the work of saving souls. Over such as these, if the signs of vocation are true, if there is a moral certainty that God has called them, the rights of parents are no longer indisputable. A higher right, that of God Himself, takes the place of the lesser. And if the father and mother are wise and truly Christian, they will accept God's will with a resignation which must, sooner or later, change into a happiness in some degree similar to the happiness Mary and Joseph felt at being called to so high an honor.

But if the parents are unwilling to per-

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

mit the Lawgiver and their divine Superior to take to His own service those whom He has placed under their temporary guardianship, then, in a prudent and respectful manner, the Child must obey the command of God and disregard that of His parents.

St. Luke tells us that Mary and Joseph “understood not the word that he spoke unto them.” They realized, however, that their Son was the divinely-appointed Messiah, even though they may not have known the exact manner in which He would work out our Redemption, nor the connection that the episode in the temple had with this future work. Still, they were happy at regaining their Son and were content to enjoy His presence as long as it was God’s will that He should remain with them: “And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth: and was subject to them.”

* * * * *

Twenty years and more pass by. The

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

time of subjection at Nazareth has come to a close. The period of the public ministry, though long and weary with its pain and sorrow, is also over. Once more Jerusalem looks upon a mother hurrying heart-broken through the streets in search of her Son. Long ago she had sought for this same Son three days and nights in vain, not knowing where He was. Now, alas, there is no uncertainty as to where she can find Him. Crowds of curious Jews are rushing to join the procession, passing slowly across the city on its way to Calvary. Mary follows in the same direction, and soon her eyes fall upon the figure of her beloved Son, covered with blood and dust and perspiration, staggering beneath the weight of the cruel cross. He has just risen from the first fall. His head is bent; His eyes, dimmed by dust and tears, gaze upon the ground in front of Him. His mother draws as close to Him as the guards permit. He feels her presence near Him, and turns

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

His gaze full upon her loving countenance. No words are necessary. That one glance is enough. Each is strengthened by it. New life comes to the Son when His mother is near. And sad as the remainder of the journey is, there is now a ray of relieving happiness shining through the hitherto unbroken cloud of grief that had closed about Him, when He took up His cross and started on the way to Calvary.

The summit of the mount is reached, and the Son is raised upon the cross. Still the mother is close to Him, as close as she can press to the foot of the cross. The end is near. Mary knows that her Child is dying. She knows why this must be so; and the sword of sorrow sinks slowly to the depths of her heart.

The eyes of the Saviour are closed. For some time He has neither looked at those around Him, nor spoken a word. But His lips are continually moving in prayer. This, and the labored breathing, are the only

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

signs that the feeble spark of life has not been totally extinguished. Will it go out without another evidence of love from Son to Mother?

Mary's face is transformed with agony. Her eyes, wide open, see nothing but the countenance of her divine Son. Thus she has stood since the cross was raised. Not a movement of the nail-pierced figure, not a tear trickling down the pallid cheek, not even the involuntary closing of an eyelid has escaped her notice. How eagerly she waits! How anxiously she longs for some word to come from His lips, some last message for her, His mother!

He has spoken to His Father, asking forgiveness for His persecutors; He has spoken to the penitent thief, and promised him the happiness of paradise: but as yet no word has He addressed to His mother. Does she think, as she stands there at His feet, that perhaps it is part of God's plan that this farewell message be denied her?

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

Does the memory of the Boy's answer in the temple so many years ago flash across her mind? And does she think that God's business is filling His heart now also, to the exclusion of everything else? Will the business of the Father permit Him to give His mother a last word of parting?

Yes. For now at last her time has come. Slowly the eyes open. The head is turned towards the weeping mother. Her heart is thrilled by a new transport of love. The lines of anguish are softened by eager expectation. Mother and Son look into each other's eyes. Let us try to fathom the depths of love revealed by that momentary glance of mutual affection, and by the words that fall sweetly from the lips of the dying Saviour, as with His last breath almost He consigns to the Apostle of Love that mother with whom His earthly relationship is now over.

Loving and obeying her as a true Son in the days of Nazareth, His later life, so full

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

of active work for mankind, is still a model of filial devotion, so true a model that no physical pain, nor mental anguish; no, not even the all-important work of Redemption could crowd out from His mind the thought of His mother, or from His heart that love for her which He wishes every child to have for his parents, at all times and in every state of life.

CHAPTER II

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE.

“Then he saith to them : Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s. . . .”—
Matt. xxii, 21.

OBEDIENCE to the State is absolutely necessary in every form of government, but especially is this true in a government of the people and by the people. When each citizen has a voice in the election of those who make and execute the laws, there is danger of this close relationship between citizen and civil authority engendering that familiarity which breeds contempt, especially if those who hold the power from the people prove themselves unworthy of their position. In practice men, as a rule, have difficulty in distinguishing between the authority they give to a man and the man himself. If he betray even an ordinary

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

weakness in administering his power, the criticism he justly incurs is apt to strike deeper than the individual. It is apt to wound the authority itself.

With the many examples we have at the present day of those who deliberately misuse their power, turn it to personal ends, and deprive the people of their just dues, it is very hard to maintain the proper respect for the power itself. And this difficulty is made more pronounced by reason of the great freedom of pen and tongue shown by those who examine and openly discuss, not only the public acts, but even the private life, of one who holds power from the people. Individual liberty, the safeguard of a Republic, may also act, unless it be kept pure by the action of patriotic principles, as a weapon of self-destruction.

It needs no very keen observer to detect in our country to-day, especially in the younger generation, frequent signs of a

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

growing disrespect for authority, a disrespect that will eventually, unless a riper experience and a wiser counsel neutralize it, weaken and even destroy that true liberty which forms the basis of our government.

The evil often begins with a lack of respect, and at times even a positive contempt, for those who are appointed to safeguard the rights of the individual citizens from amongst whom they have been chosen. And indeed in many cases there is provocation for this attitude of disrespect or contempt. Take, for example, the all too frequent case of a man guilty of some misdemeanor and through influence political or otherwise, escaping just punishment. These matters cannot always be kept secret; and it is very hard, especially for the young, to manifest a proper respect for the civil authority that permits this failure of justice.

An appeal to a man's patriotism; a persevering effort to make him see the necessity of respect and obedience from a merely

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

natural and utilitarian point of view, and to teach him the necessity of constantly distinguishing between the man and the office, between the official who merits criticism and the authority that must not be despised—all this will go a great way towards securing proper obedience to the State. But it does not go to the root of the matter. Men must realize that authority is ultimately from God, and they must learn to respect it as coming from God, otherwise their obedience will not in extreme cases, stand the strain imposed upon it by frequent examples of the abuse of authority.

It is not necessary to treat those who rule us as God's immediate representatives. We are not called upon to acknowledge the divine right of kings, or of our own civil rulers. But, nevertheless, St. Paul's words are just as true in our case, and just as applicable to our republican institutions: "All power is from God." The power, indeed, always comes from Him, even though

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

the possession of it (except in the few instances recorded in the Bible, e. g., David and Solomon) does not come immediately from the same divine source.

In our efforts to realize the divine element in civil power, to learn how to respect this power as coming from God, and to “render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s” we turn for guidance to One who was submissive to earthly rulers, even though He was the King of kings, and thus subject to no one—our Divine Master. His obedience to the State, because entirely voluntary, can be attributed primarily to no other motive than to His desire to give us a perfect Model of respect for civil authority.

His example is all the more striking because He lived at a time when Palestine was under the yoke of Rome, and when the Jews, especially the Galileans, were frequently rising in revolt against this foreign dominion. The most threatening of these

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

uprisings had just been quelled by the Roman troops. The people, whose patriotism had been fanned to a white heat by centuries of glorious national life, whose pride of race had been made all the stronger by their pride of religion, conscious as they were of being God's chosen people, would naturally expect to find a deep-seated, bitter antagonism to Rome in Him who claimed to be their Anointed One, their Messiah. In contrast to this popular ideal, this deeply-rooted hope of the Jews, the exact obedience of our Lord to the constituted authority of Cæsar, and His perfect respect, both in practice and teaching, for the representatives of this authority, stand out all the more prominently.

It was very hard for a true Hebrew to respect and obey as civil rulers those who were regarded as so far inferior to God's chosen people. It is this special difficulty which brings out all the more vividly the lesson taught us by the Master. For in giv-

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

ing us the example of obedience, as well as of the other virtues, He wished the circumstances surrounding His example to be as difficult as possible, so that we who strive to imitate Him might find ourselves in no condition that could possibly be more opposed to the practice of the virtue than that in which He was placed.

The example of obedience to civil authority given us by our Lord is all the more intelligible and more applicable to ourselves in our present political and social conditions, because of the distinction then drawn between the civil rule of the Romans, and the national religious life of the Jews with the various powers Cæsar permitted the conquered race still to exercise.

It is not, therefore, very difficult for us to distinguish between our Lord's civil and His religious obedience, and to treat of each form separately. He submits Himself to two distinct superiors: the Roman ruler and the Jewish high priest. Two codes of

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

laws He obeys: the pagan in civil affairs, and the divinely-revealed code of the Old Testament in religious matters. Perfect obedience He gave to both, to the former no less than to the latter.

There were indeed many occasions on which He rightly refused obedience to various additions to the Mosaic code that had crept in during the centuries just past. But it is His duty as a religious leader to purify the then existing religious practices, so that they might form a fitting foundation for the perfecting process that was to result in the New, the complete and final, Dispensation.

This duty led to the many rebukes He gave to the Pharisees, and eventually brought about His death on the cross. It explains the apparent lack of respect for authority in His cleansing of the temple, and also in His answer to the Pharisees when they tell Him that Herod has a mind to kill Him. In the former case the abuse

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

was one that called for the exercise of religious authority, and as such was outside the sphere of the Roman ruler, as the Jews managed their religious matters, in the main, independently of Rome. In the latter case, the threat of Herod was an entirely unjustifiable interference with our Lord's actions which were in no wise opposed to any law of the Romans.

In considering Christ's obedience to civil rulers, it is necessary to bear in mind the above distinction, to look upon Him as a subject of Rome, and, in so far as we are able, to examine the words and acts of the Religious Leader from this view-point.

Our Lord's life of subjection to earthly rulers was foreshadowed by the circumstances of His birth. It was at the behest of the Roman ruler that Mary and Joseph removed to Bethlehem, where the Child was born in circumstances of poverty and misery that could have been avoided had the civil

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

law been disregarded and Nazareth been the scene of the Nativity.

Even before He begins His public ministry, our Lord gave a clear indication of His purpose to act in entire conformity with the then existing form of government. In the wilderness the devil tempts Him, promising to give Him "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." But our Saviour has no intention of playing the part of an earthly king, much less at the price of paying adoration to Satan.

From the very beginning of His public ministry He carefully avoided every word or act that might be construed as hostile to the Roman rule. He could not however help being brought prominently before the people. His Mission as Messiah made this publicity unavoidable. The miracles that He worked, the many words of comfort and advice that He gave to those who followed Him, His most lovable personality

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

and His powerful discourses at once won Him the hearts of all.

Viewing Him only from a natural point of view, putting aside for the moment the supernatural element, it is not too much to say that, had His purpose been a merely earthly one, no other power could have moulded the men of His time and country into so formidable a force against Rome. Of course He realized this and knew the danger of it. Often He strove to neutralize the effect of His loving-kindness upon the people whom He helped, by warning them not to mention to any man the good He had done them. To avoid their effusive expressions of gratitude, He fled from them and hid Himself in solitary places where he might be alone to commune with His Father. One time the people strove to make Him king, but He, "when he knew that they would come to take him by force to make him king, fled again into the mountain himself alone."

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

He led, it is true, a triumphal procession through Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and was then hailed as king. But no semblance of revolt against Rome could be detected in the Meek Monarch riding through the streets seated upon an ass, followed by the cheering crowd of Jews. Had there been any reason for suspecting our Lord of revolt or lack of respect for the civil authority, the emissaries of Rome who were watching the procession would quickly have seized its Leader.

From the moment in which the jealousy and suspicion of the high priests and of the Scribes and Pharisees were first aroused, they diligently sought some way of weakening the influence of our Saviour. The more enemies a man has and the more bitter, the speedier and more complete will be the discovery of his weaknesses and their revelation to a world that is all too wide-awake when it hears of his faults. Especially is this true of one who is prominent before

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

the people. Few can bear the light of public scrutiny, especially if it be a hostile public. Our Lord was before His enemies for three years. He was a Galilean; by reason of this fact alone He was open to the suspicion of Rome, for the insurrections of the Jews against foreign rule had originated for the most part in Galilee and had been led by Galileans. Moreover, our Saviour was a leader of thousands. He spoke to His followers many times, always in places where spies could and did hear His every word.

The Jewish leaders knew that the quickest and surest way of getting rid of our Lord was to denounce and convict Him as a rebel to the rule of Rome. The latter's representatives in Palestine were keenly watchful for the first sign of an insurrection, and just as quick to stamp it out. Little mercy was shown. Two thousand insurgents had been crucified by them outside the city after one of the many revolts.

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

And yet, in spite of these conditions, in themselves so favorable to the plans of our Lord's enemies, the latter can sustain against Him no charge of disobedience to the laws of Rome, no imputation of disloyalty to her, nor of the slightest disrespect for her authority.

When He is brought before the civil court for trial, after the arrest in Gethsemane, three charges are preferred against Him: "We have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he is Christ the King." But Pilate cannot find Him guilty, "I find no cause in this man." After Herod mocks Him and sends Him back to Pilate, the latter again, in spite of the charges heaped upon our Lord, declares that both he and Herod have failed to find the Prisoner guilty.

The second of the three charges brought in the first instance against our Saviour in the court of Pilate states that He had for-



MUNKÁCSY

CHRIST BEFORE PILATE

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

bidden the people to pay tribute to Cæsar. The fact that the Jews had the hardihood to make this accusation is itself evidence of the weakness of their case. Its falsity was evident to all who had followed the public life of our Lord, especially during the preceding week. For it had been only three days before this that, openly in the temple, the Jews had made their last cunning attempt to entrap the Master in some declaration that would lend itself to the accomplishment of their long cherished plan of convicting Him of treason to Rome.

The question then proposed for His solution was the much discussed one of the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar. Palestine had witnessed many revolts because of this tribute which the Jews were forced to pay to their conquerors. Judas of Galilee was one of the most noteworthy of those who had denied the right of Rome to exact the tribute. Very many shared

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

his views, but fear of Cæsar kept them from appealing to arms in defence of their opinion. Privately, the lawfulness of paying it was much discussed, and the Roman authorities seemed to tolerate this discussion as long as it did not interfere with the actual payment of the tax.

The Herodians, the Tories of Palestine, who favored the rule of Herod, Rome's representative, were requested by the Pharisees to help them in the attempt to ensnare our Lord. A deputation composed of representatives from both parties was selected to question Him. After a rather crude attempt to hide their true feelings under the mask of flattery, they asked the Master whether it was lawful for them to pay tribute to Cæsar or not. If He were to answer yes, He would lose the friendship of the great number of the Jews who held that it was wrong for the followers of the one true God to pay tribute to a pagan ruler. If His answer were in the negative, then

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

His enemies would have sure grounds for an accusation of disloyalty to Cæsar.

They rather expected the latter answer, for, notwithstanding their hatred of our Saviour, they felt in their hearts that He was a true Hebrew, and they could not conceive of Him, as a loyal Son of the Law, admitting the legality of paying tribute money to Rome.

What made the question so delicate a one was the complication caused by the presence of both religious and civil elements. There appeared to be a conflict of two rights. It seemed impossible to admit one without denying the other. Granted that Rome, for a century the *de facto* ruler of Palestine, had a right to demand tribute as a return for the protection she gave the Jews, could the latter, in view of their duties to God, pay a tax to those who worshipped false deities, whose ruler himself was regarded as divine?

To the Pharisees present when the ques-

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

tion was asked our Lord, there appeared to be but one answer for a true believer in Jehovah. They had no idea of the distinction between Church and State. They were unable to conceive of a civil power that was not identified, or intimately associated, with a religious power. They could not understand how they might pay tax to the Roman Emperor, without at the same time implicitly acknowledging him as Pontifex Maximus also.

Our Saviour went at once to the root of the matter. He asked for the coin with which they were accustomed to pay the tax. Out of deference to the Jews, Rome had permitted them to use a special coin for this purpose, one that had no image of the emperor stamped upon it. This, however, was not the coin given in response to our Lord's request, but there was handed to Him an ordinary Roman denarius, showing on one side the head of Tiberius with the inscription, "Tiberius Cæsar, Son of the Divine

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

Augustus." Our Lord asks, "Whose image and inscription is this? They say to him Cæsar's. Then he saith to them: Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's: and to God the things that are God's."

Outwitted, they withdraw in confusion. The full purport of our Saviour's answer they do not grasp. Preconceived opinions cloud their minds and keep them from understanding the distinction that formed the foundation of the Master's answer. But of one thing they feel sure: this unexpected reply leaves them no opportunity to accuse Christ, either of heresy or treason. They have been outwitted without even the slightest chance even to pretend to be scandalized at the Master's attitude towards their religion and towards their earthly rulers.

According to the teaching of their own Rabbis, to accept and use the coinage of a ruler was equivalent to recognizing his power over them. Now for years, in busi-

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

ness transactions as well as in the payment of taxes, they had used money coined by Rome. Hence they had been acknowledging the civil dominion of Cæsar.

Our Saviour shows them that they cannot refuse obedience to the laws of the existing form of government. The religious question did not, in this case, affect the legality of paying the tribute. Rome had granted them liberty in the exercise of their religion. Her sphere was distinct from the worship of Jehovah. So long as she did not trespass on their rights as the chosen nation, there could be no question of their obligation to render exact and complete obedience to her laws.

This encounter with the scheming Pharisees and Herodians has given us our Lord's plainest and most important public pronouncement on the relative relations of the citizen to his country and to his God. Perhaps it is the only concrete, direct example He gives us, because the payment of

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

the stater by Peter at the command of His Master was very probably in compliance with the religious law prescribing a tax for the support of the temple at Jerusalem.

Be that as it may, there is one thing to be especially noted about our Lord's direct teaching in regard to obedience to civil authority. And that is the relatively insignificant portion of the Gospel given up to it. We say *relatively* insignificant, because not even a single word spoken by our Saviour, not even His slightest action is without a tremendous importance in itself. It is plain that He had in mind one thing above all else, and that is the spiritual regeneration and eternal happiness of man. Even this one command of giving to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar is immediately followed by the more important command of rendering to our Infinite Ruler in Heaven what of right belongs to Him.

But the very fact that our Saviour couples the obedience we owe to the State with the

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

obedience we owe to God shows how high a value He attaches to the former. In our life here on earth each one is necessary. The latter, obedience to God, cannot be given without the former. No more than the former can be given consistently and perseveringly without the latter. The two species of obedience may be distinct, but they cannot be so separated as to be absolutely independent of each other. The two powers that command the obedience may be lodged in two different sets of representatives, as they were when our Lord lived on earth, but ultimately each one is from the same source. Contempt for civil authorities is indirectly, but no less surely, contempt for the power of God.

It would be vain to seek in the Gospel any argument favoring one particular form of civil government as better than another. Christ said, "render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," but He would have commanded the same obedience had the form of

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

government been different. Emperor, President, King, any legally constituted ruler, may be the Cæsar to whom we are to render obedience. The great point is this: obedience and respect must be given, otherwise society cannot exist.

Our Saviour's principal work, so far as the relation of man to the civil government is concerned, lay with the individual soul. His most important task was to save that soul by leading it to know, love and serve God. And we might say that this was, in a certain sense, His only task. Not that He disregarded the earthly interests of man and paid no heed to his temporal happiness. Far from it. His life proves the contrary. No philanthropist ever lived who worked so hard to make man naturally happier.

But His work of leading man to eternal happiness included as a lesser, but still an ever-present, part, the work of making him a more dutiful son, a more loving parent, a more charitable neighbor, a more loyal

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

and obedient citizen. The principles He taught men to act upon in their efforts to save their souls, were the principles best calculated to make them better citizens also. The commands He gave as necessary for them to obey if they wished to remain in a state of friendship with God included, at least in the germ, every possible law that a State could formulate for its own existence and the well-being of those who constituted it.

Take as an example of this His Sermon on the Mount. It is not a discourse on the duties of citizens to their country. It was not delivered primarily to advance the well-being of the State. And yet if all men followed the precepts contained in it, there would be a perfect obedience to civil authority, a total absence of injustice in the relations of citizens to each other and to the State; and the purpose of all civil government, the peace and temporal prosperity of mankind, would be perfectly secured.

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

Take away from this life the hatred, the revenge that are forbidden by our Lord in this sermon, and substitute the charity, mutual forbearance, forgiveness of injuries here inculcated; remove the sins of impurity in act and desire, divorce, perjury and the other crimes condemned so plainly, and put in their place clean minds and hearts, sanctity of marriage relations, fidelity and honor; let men who are able give with a good heart to those in need; let all learn to love each other even as Christ loved us—and you have the ideal commonwealth, without directly and *ex professo* dealing with the State.

It is the man that makes the nation. The latter safeguards him and gives him the opportunities, the freedom necessary for perfecting self and aiding others. It is in reality the servant of the people. It has obligations towards them which it must fulfill. But together with this high responsibility for the welfare of its members there

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

goes hand in hand the right to demand and receive the obedience of each citizen, in so far as this is necessary for the performance of its duties. And this right, so long as the government retains its responsibility, is inalienable.

Although we are subject to the governing power, the latter is, in the highest and truest sense of the word, the servant of the public. In the light of this fact, how true and practical are the words of Christ to His apostles, words formulating the fundamental principle that should guide the actions of those in authority: "You know that they who seem to rule over the gentiles, lord it over them: and their princes have power over them. But it is not so among you: but whosoever will be greater, shall be your minister. And whosoever will be first among you, shall be the servant of all."

Those who hold power do not hold it for their own benefit, to use it for self-aggrandizement, but are bound in conscience to

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

wield it as the servants of the people. Far from being a degradation, this service is most noble, since it is in direct imitation of Christ Himself, "For the Son of man also is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister."

It is not, therefore, an unequal exchange that our Lord requires. It is hard at times to obey and respect those in power, who may be in themselves no better fitted for their position than we are, but it is equally hard for them to use their power in the capacity of servants, for us alone, and not for the advancement of their own interests.

It may be objected that these principles are all right in theory, but that they do not work out well in practice; that our civil rulers are too prone to "lord it" over those whom they govern, not by a show of force as in the olden days, but by a less crude method, by means of cleverly conceived political schemes for controlling the resources of the country and permitting the

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

vast majority of the people to gain but an insignificant share of this world's goods.

In answer to this, it is impossible to deny that such a condition, in a degree varying in different places, does exist at the present time, and is a serious menace to the peace and permanent prosperity of society. But the condition that now obtains is not the result of the working out of our Lord's principles. And what else could we expect in a nation like our own, for example, where not one third of those who elect the officers of the State is affiliated with a Christian Church?

That the condition is not worse than it is is due to the influence of the small number of professed and practical Christians, and also to the constantly decreasing remnants of Christian practice that oftentimes remain in the lives of those who have long since given up their interest in the religion of Christ.

The moment that this leaven ceases to

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

act upon the mass of voters—and its action already seems to be growing less effective—that moment will principles other than Christ's have a predominating, instead of a merely impeding, influence upon our form of government. And then—may God avert the calamity—those whose enmity towards the doctrines of the Master grows daily more outspoken, will have a chance to see how their principles work out in practice.

Our Saviour did not draw up a detailed scheme of the duties incumbent upon those who govern and those who are governed. Even if He had done so, it would be of little practical help at the present time, because the conditions existing in His day were entirely different from those of the modern world. He laid down, as we have tried to show, only the fundamental principles. And these, be it remembered, were perfect principles suited for all times and conditions.

Those who study them thoroughly and

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

without bias, will find a solution for every political problem, even the most perplexing ones of our time and country. What we need, therefore, is not a new set of principles, not a new system of laws, at least not a new system of fundamental laws; but men with minds enlightened by faith and hearts filled with love and wills strengthened by grace. For it is men like these who alone will be able to interpret the doctrines of the Master, apply them to existing conditions and enact whatever legislation is necessary to alleviate the conditions that oppress mankind at the present day.

We need also Christian citizens who are ready to obey and respect the authority which directs them; citizens who are wise enough to elect as their civil superiors men who themselves have learned to obey the laws and respect authority. For no man is fit to govern who has proved himself lacking in these qualifications so essential for every citizen.

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

There are times, of course, when even the constituted civil authority may overstep its limits and pass laws interfering, for example, with a man's freedom of worship, or commanding some act that would be sinful. As an illustration of this latter, we have the attempts of various Roman Emperors to force the Christians to worship idols. In cases like these, if obedience to civil authority necessarily involves an infraction of God's law, the command must not be complied with.

There are more complex problems, however, in this question of rendering obedience to civil authorities, which cannot be solved so simply. There are times when economic conditions become so distressing and so hard to bear that men, almost in desperation, are strongly tempted to refuse obedience and respect to the system of government that permits this state of misery to exist, nay, even seems at times to open up opportunities for intensifying it. Take, for example, a

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

condition like the following: a large portion of the working classes unable to earn a decent living because unscrupulous men of wealth and influence not only refuse to grant sufficient wages to their employees, but even succeed by illegitimate means in influencing members of legislative bodies, or other government officials, to favor the interests of capital at the expense of the people. How is a problem like this to be solved in the light of Christ's principles?

A condition of this kind would exist because these principles had not been put into practice, or had been hampered in their action by the introduction of opposing principles; because, too, the individual soul had not been permeated by the Christ-like spirit of charity that would never permit conditions like these to come into existence.

Give the principles of Christ a chance to influence those who are responsible for the condition of the laboring classes, so that they will take steps to ameliorate this con-

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

dition. Let these principles operate also in those who suffer, urging them to bear their trials in a spirit of Christian patience, and teaching them where their power as citizens really lies,—in a prudent, independent use of their vote at the polls, not in an irrational effort to better themselves by resorting to physical violence.

Mutual forbearance, mutual understanding, and above all, the spirit of respect for duly-constituted authority, a respect that must be felt by the official as well as by the citizen; these are the fundamental requisites afforded for the solution of the problem by the teachings of the Master. For the working out of details we must look to men whose minds and hearts have been trained in the school of the same Master. The better they shall have studied this Model, the speedier and less difficult will be the final attainment of the temporal tranquillity and material prosperity of mankind.

Our study of the Master's practice and

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

principles in regard to obedience to the State would not be complete without some reference to the example and teachings of those who reflected in their lives the influence of our Lord, either as His immediate followers who listened to the very words that fell from the lips of the Saviour, or as members of the Sub-Apostolic Church. Surely those who were so close to our Lord can give us some indications as to the nature of the lessons in obedience to civil authority taught by the Master.

No one dare assert that these followers, with the fervor so characteristic of their lives in other matters, would have failed to pattern their obedience to civil authority as closely as possible after our Lord's example and teaching. It is true, we read of the apostles being cast into prison and scourged at the order of the Roman authorities. But this was done at the instigation of the Jews whose opposition to Christianity was kept alive by the Pharisees and other He-

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

brew leaders, who saw with chagrin that the death of our Saviour had not put a stop to the rapid spread of His teachings.

The account given us in Acts xvi, 19-21, is typical of the conduct of the Jews in regard to the apostles: "But her masters seeing that the hope of their gain was gone, apprehending Paul and Silas, brought them into the market-place to the rulers. And presenting them to the magistrates, they said: These men disturb our city, being Jews: And preach a fashion which it is not lawful for us to receive, nor observe, being Romans." It is needless to point out the self-interest, jealousy and hatred that formed the only foundation for these charges and others like them.

What Peter and Paul and the other apostles actually did teach was in no way subversive of the constituted authority of Rome. And this is not a general statement deduced indirectly from their doctrines on other points, but it is founded upon their

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

direct teaching in regard to this matter, a teaching that is plainly put forth in certain letters of theirs that form part of the New Testament.

These letters contain clear statements of the necessity of obedience to authority, in their case to the authority of Rome. St. Paul speaks of this matter in two of his epistles: i. e., to the Christians at Rome and to his disciple, Titus. St. Peter refers to it in the second chapter of his first epistle addressed, as he tells us, to the Christians "dispersed through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia."

In all these cases the words are clear and directly to the point. To Titus, St. Paul says, "Admonish them to be subject to princes and powers, to obey at a word." Not only is obedience to civil authority here commanded, but its character is also described. Christians must obey their civil rulers promptly, unquestioningly, "at a word."

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

To the Romans a lengthier exhortation is given: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers: for there is no power but from God: and those that are, are ordained by God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation. For princes are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise for the same. For he is God's minister to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, fear: for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is God's minister: an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore be subject of necessity, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

We have here an admirable exposition of the Christian attitude toward the State. At the very outset, the duty of the Christian to be subject to civil authority is stated in unmistakable language. The highest

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

motive for this respect and obedience is then given in the statement of the ultimate source of civil authority, namely, God Himself. The act of resisting the power of the State draws its malice primarily from the fact that it is resistance of God's authority. The punishment due this resistance is not merely an earthly, but a divine, punishment, because the injury affects God Himself. The primary function of civil authority is clearly stated, "he is God's minister to thee for good." A secondary function, one naturally connoted by the first, is also set forth, "He is God's minister: an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Finally there is the exhortation to render our obedience not merely from fear, but for a higher reason, "for conscience sake," since it is God who asks this obedience from us.

St. Peter's admonition is substantially identical with St. Paul's: "Be ye subject therefore to every human creature for God's

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

sake: whether it be to the king as excelling: Or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of the good: For so is the will of God." But St. Peter adds a special, an additional reason why Christians must be particularly careful to give good example in this matter: i. e., "that by doing well you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

He sees the difficulty Christians will have of convincing their pagan neighbors and rulers of their loyalty to a State with which, in religion, they can have no sympathy. He realizes that the slightest disobedience to civil authority will react not only upon the Christian who disobeys but also upon Christianity itself. The followers of the Master must, if possible, be even more loyal than the Romans themselves.

The Emperors of the second century did not consider it necessary to trouble themselves about the loyalty of the Christians. Indeed some regulations imposed upon the

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

governors of provinces were plainly calculated to keep down any uprising against the Christians. The latter were frequently persecuted, but it was superstition and hatred that led to this exhibition of enmity on the part of the pagans.

People thought that wars and pestilences were the result of the anger of the gods at the toleration shown the Christians. The two charges most frequently brought against the followers of Jesus, Atheism and Hatred of Mankind (*Odium Generis Humani*), were far from implying any lack of respect for constituted civil authority. The former was simply a refusal to adore the Roman deities. The latter was a failure on the part of the Christians to live according to the Roman standard of civilization, a standard that tolerated divorce and the lowest forms of sensual pleasure.

The principles of morality followed by the Christians would not permit them to share in the licentiousness of Rome, conse-

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

quently their lives were, in many respects, a direct contrast to the lives of their pagan neighbors. The latter were irritated by this silent, but ever-present reproach. Naturally they resented it.

A passage in the Apology of Tertullian, chapter 42, will show us that the Christians took pride in their loyalty to the State, and were eager to defend themselves from any accusation impeaching this loyalty: “. . . . So we sojourn with you (the Pagans) in the world, abjuring neither forum, nor shambles, nor bath, nor booth, nor worship, nor inn, nor weekly market, nor any other place of commerce. We sail with you and fight with you, and till the ground with you; and in like manner we unite with you in your traffickings—even in the various arts we make public property of our works for your benefit But if I do not frequent your religious ceremonies, I am still on the sacred day a man.”

The Christians offered prayers for those

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

who ruled them and for the welfare of the State. These prayers formed part of the regular liturgical services, and the various persecutions on the part of the Roman Emperors did not put a stop to them. Cyprian writes to Demetrian, who is persecuting the Christians, "Night and day we pour forth our prayers for your peace and salvation." We find the martyrs praying for the welfare and safety of the very rulers who were putting them to death.

Thus the early Christians, reflecting in their lives the spirit of the Master, not only gave their due allegiance to the Roman Emperor, as holding his power ultimately from God, but also strove to advance the spiritual and temporal interests of this same ruler and his subordinates by offering up prayers to God, publicly and privately, in their behalf. Faithfully they put into practice the teachings of their Master, and gave to the world a practical example of what strict conformity to the Christian principles of

OBEDIENCE TO THE STATE

obedience and other virtues is able to accomplish.

For out of the immorality and oppression and paganism of Rome they caused to rise the great Christian Nations of Mediæval Europe. Had not the application of the Master's principles to the civil and social life of mankind been restricted, interrupted, and in many cases gradually deadened by doctrines fundamentally false, the world to-day would be far nearer that condition of peace and temporal prosperity so confidently promised by the many modern plans for the betterment of the existing social, political and economic conditions.

CHAPTER III

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

"Then said I: Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of me: that I should do thy will, O God."—Hebrews, x, 7.

IN addition to the relationship between children and parents, between citizens and the State, and the obedience each one implies, there enters into our lives another relationship, that which exists between man and his Maker. This is far nobler and more important than any other, because it is eternal, and brings us into intimate connection with God Himself. And naturally the obedience it begets shares in this superiority. It is true that our relations with human superiors, with parents and civil rulers, are in a certain sense directed to God, because men would have no authority over us were it not for God.

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

Therefore, broadly speaking, the obedience of the child to his parents, of the citizen to his civil rulers, of the servant to his master, also have God as their object, though not directly. But in this chapter we intend to speak of that obedience which has God as its more immediate object, springing as it does from the relationship which binds us directly and intimately with Him and forms what is called Religion.

In this relationship man stands at one term, God at the other. All our thoughts, words, actions and omissions, viewed in the light of the hereafter and measured by the eternal, unchanging standard of right and wrong, form the subject matter of this relationship. Hence we can see that it includes our relations with human superiors; only now we are not looking at these relations as influencing merely our mortal lives, our temporal prosperity; but also our unending existence, our eternal state in the world to come.

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

In view of this fact it can readily be understood how very necessary it is for us to practice this fundamental form of obedience. And yet, of all forms of obedience, that which we owe to God is least observed. This statement is equally true when we make allowance for the comparatively limited sphere of obedience to parents, or to the State, as compared with the sphere of religion. Many reasons may be given in explanation of this fact; but the fact still remains, and forms our strongest motive for seeking in the Master's life an example to guide us in obeying God, and in His merits a means to help us yield this obedience.

In the obedience we are now considering, our Superior is God; His commands are the ones we must obey. How shall we know these commands? This question is important. May we expect God to speak to us directly, as a parent to his child, or as the State to its citizens? In a loose sense, yes.

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

For He has given us conscience and has placed in each soul the broad, general principles of right and wrong, the natural law. In the blameless absence of all other knowledge, this may suffice. Otherwise, surely not. Experience alone shows us that men, relying on natural reason alone, have interpreted this law in diverse ways, and that no certain, sufficient, uniform and unchanging system of right and wrong can result from such a method of interpretation.

Nor has the revelation granted by God to mankind been in itself sufficient to give men, interpreting it privately, an adequate idea of what He wishes us to do in our relations with Himself. The many conflicting interpretations of Holy Writ prove this. Since God is One, Unchanging, His laws must be the same. If He were to stand before us in person and give us the detailed knowledge we need in order to render Him true obedience; If He were to leave us no room for doubt and hesitation, there would

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

not be any difficulty. But He does not act thus. And yet, the obedience He demands of us presupposes this detailed knowledge. He has, therefore, since He is all-just and all-loving, appointed representatives who are to act in His place as our superiors, and interpret His will to us. Giving obedience to these we obey God Himself.

Has not our Lord shown us this by His life and by His teachings? If He, being God, gave obedience in religious matters to human beings because they represented His Father, unworthy though they were, may we refuse the same obedience to those who now act as the ambassadors of this same Saviour?

In the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew, we find a clear statement of our Lord's views on obedience to God's human representatives. Speaking to His disciples and to a multitude of Jews at Jerusalem, He says: "The Scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses. All

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do: but according to their works do ye not: for they say and do not." Moses, the lawgiver of the Jews, has spoken authoritatively as inspired by God. Those who take his place, who sit on his chair, as it were, and interpret the law, must be obeyed when they act in this capacity. But in their private capacity, they have no power to compel obedience. Indeed, to follow them then would often lead to sin. For frequently they act not according to their teachings.

Our Saviour carefully distinguishes between the man and the priest, between the Scribes and the Pharisees in their private capacity and in their public office. His plain insistence on the obedience due them as interpreters of the Law is all the more striking and emphatic because of the evil and irreligious character of their private lives. Here again we have an extreme case given by our Lord. For it is hardly likely

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

that religious leaders would ever be personally more shallow and hypocritical than the Scribes and Pharisees to whom our Lord commands obedience to be given when they sit on the chair of Moses.

And not only does He urge others to conform to the laws of a religious system over which there are many unworthy men acting a judicial and executive capacity, but He Himself is under that religious system, and, therefore, subject to its leaders. He complies faithfully with all the legislation authoritatively prescribed. Even when He exercises His divine power and cleanses the ten lepers, He orders them to go and show themselves to the priest as was prescribed by the Law of Moses.

From the very beginning of His earthly life, He is subject to the Jewish priests, and to the various prescriptions of the Mosaic code. When He is but eight days old, His blood is shed in compliance with the law of Circumcision. But a few weeks

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

afterward, He is taken to the temple, where His mother is purified according to the Jewish rite, and He Himself is presented to His Father and bought back by the payment of a pair of turtle-doves. When John the Baptist preaches repentance, He presents Himself for baptism on the bank of the Jordan. We read of Him frequenting Synagogues and expounding the Law according to the Jewish custom. He goes to Jerusalem to attend the various feasts, and on the very eve of His death, He celebrates the Paschal Supper with all due formality.

Even in the observance of the merely temporal part of divine worship, we find Him acting as a model of obedience for our edification. He orders Peter to pay the didrachma (very likely the temple tax) although He was not bound to pay it since, as He tells us, "the children are free." Yet He complies, primarily to give us an

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

example, "that we may not scandalize them."

There were, it is true, many regulations of the Scribes and Pharisees which our Lord refused to obey, and oftentimes strongly attacked. But these were the abuses that had crept in, the "insupportable burdens" laid on men's shoulders by the Jewish leaders, burdens that were contrary to the spirit of the Mosaic Law. They were the prescriptions of the Scribes and Pharisees acting in their private capacity, and not as "sitting on the chair of Moses."

Our Lord with His perfect knowledge could at once distinguish what was legitimate and deserving of obedience, from the multitude of empty forms that had no part in the authentic code. And so He could make no mistake when He inveighed against various parts of the religious system as it existed in His day, and gave perfect obedience to the exactions of the

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

Jewish priests in regard to the remaining parts.

Long before the time of our Lord the prophets of the chosen race had acted thus, sternly decrying abuses, while they themselves obeyed the real Law. But these were human instruments of God's providence, working, it is true, under divine guidance and inspiration, but still human. And it is a significant fact that their work was one of reform only, reform within the Jewish Church. They called back to the Mosaic Code the Israelites wandering once more in the desert, the desert of fading faith and increasing idolatry. No new Church did they found; not a jot or tittle of the Law, in its original integrity and as authoritatively interpreted, did they alter or destroy.

But now, when this Old Dispensation itself is to give way to a New One; when the work is not only a task of tearing away the thick accumulation of empty forms and

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

useless ceremonies, the burdens that make heavy and halting the intercourse between God and man, but a work of perfecting the Old Law by forming a New Church, with institutions essentially different from the Old; now we find no mere man chosen for the work; but there is sent from heaven to execute this mission a Being Who is both divine and human, the Very Son of God Himself. So high is the regard of the Father for the authority of those who, as religious leaders, represent Him on earth, so carefully does He safeguard this authority, that He will have it destroyed only by His Divine Son. And this Son made man renders perfect obedience in all essentials to His Father's representatives, even while He is preparing for their removal, for the final foundation of His Church. Even up to His death does He obey them, even up to the consummation of Calvary, when the veil of the temple is rent in two,

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

and the claim of the Synagogue to obedience is gone forever.

Thus far we have been following our Saviour at a distance. We have been mingling with the crowds in the temple, on the hillside, or by the shore of Tiberias. We have been witnessing only His public manifestations of perfect obedience to His Father's will, in so far as that will has been interpreted by those who are at the head of the Jewish religion. But now let us come closer. Let us dare to penetrate even the secret recesses of the soul of the Master. This is thrice holy ground. Angels, archangels, the noblest of created beings, hesitate to enter here; and fall prostrate, with hushed voice and bated breath, when they see the splendor now revealed.

For it is in the interior life of Christ, in His immediate intercourse with His Father, that we learn the highest and most beautiful lesson of obedience to the will of God. It

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

is not the busy streets of the city, nor the temple's crowded courts, that tell us most about our Lord's submission to Divine commands. No, for the stars that gazed upon Him night after night, as He prayed to His Father, and the wild desert that watched His victory over Satan, and the trees that shaded the grotto of Gethsemane—these can reveal in far fuller measure the obedience of the Master.

“I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.” Ever present to the mind of Christ was this motive for His life on earth, to do the will of His Father. No merely human being could have so adequate an idea of what God requires of him, as our Saviour had of the Divine will in His regard. For His intelligence grasped perfectly the full scope of the words, “the will of him that sent me.” All that they implied was before Him every moment of His life. The Babe in the stable knew as well as the Master in

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

the temple what was required of Him. No defect of intelligence could lessen for Him the gravity of His task, or soften the suffering that obedience necessitated.

While He knew at all times what His Father wished Him to do, so likewise did He fully realize the countless difficulties in the way of obeying the Divine will. His human nature had its repugnance, its fear and its instinctive tendency to shrink from danger and pain, both mental and physical, otherwise it would not have been true human nature. And He had to fight off this human frailty, not only at the moment of accomplishing each part of the work of Redemption, but many times before the actual conflict, for there was always in His life the struggle of anticipation.

Even in the home at Nazareth, where the long days of quiet, peaceful toil, and the evening's respite from labor in the company of Mary and Joseph had every appearance of perfect happiness, there was in the mind

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

of the God-child, the foreknowledge of His sufferings, and in His heart the foretaste of the final struggles; while His will, even then, heard plainly the voice of God and stood up sternly and unfalteringly against the fears of the flesh.

And at last when the anticipatory struggle of the hidden life merged into the final conflict made necessary by the actual accomplishment of His mission, the battle with Satan was not fought out once and for all, for example, in the wilderness at the threshold of the public ministry, but continued raging until the end.

Before the obedience that made this struggle a constantly victorious one, the submission He gave to the priests of Israel, perfect though it was, pales into comparative insignificance. Others saw His compliance with the Law of Moses; none but the Father witnessed the more immediate and far more significant subjection of the Man-God to the Divine will. It was an in-



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THE BABE IN THE STABLE

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OBEDIENCE TO GOD

terior struggle, and, therefore, all the more terrible, for the stress of battle, kept within the citadel of the soul, grew in intensity by reason of its concentration.

And after all, the battle-ground where the real conflict is fought between the forces that make for obedience, and the frailty of the flesh that strives to flee from the hardship, the self-restraint made necessary by submission to a higher law, is always hidden in the hearts of men. Even though actions, words or omissions be necessary to complete some forms of obedience, still, many a conflict must rage within us before these external signs of submission are given and the command is fully obeyed. And so it is that our Lord's internal submission, with all that it implies, makes a far stronger appeal to our hearts, and is far more valuable as an example for our imitation, than His external obedience, indispensable and perfect as the latter is.

The laws that are laid down for us by the

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

State, the commands that come from the lips of parents, the external regulations imposed upon us by the Church, the precepts of God that deal immediately with our words, acts and omissions—all these require, as a foundation to secure for them a perfect and persevering compliance on our part, interior obedience and submission of the will.

But then, deeper still than these manifestations of authority that appeal to our outer life, how many are the phases of God's law that deal directly and solely with our inner life. How often must the will be kept from willing that which is not lawful, even though no sign of this would ever appear upon the surface! How often must the heart be kept from desiring that which is evil, even while we know the attainment of the evil desired is impossible! How often must the mind be kept from thinking certain thoughts that God and ourselves alone would ever know! And all this must be

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

done because of the Divine "thou must not," which we are bound to obey. The lower nature seeks to make us break the law; the passions fiercely urge us on; the voice of evil speaks to us in smooth, persuasive tone, telling us that no one will be the wiser if we yield.

And so the battle rages in the soul, and oftentimes, wearied with the strife, we long for human sympathy, for some word of encouragement from those who love us. Yet none but the Master's eye can gaze into the depths of our souls, and clearly see the gravity of the conflict we are waging, and the need we have for help. And none but the Master's hand can sustain the will that else would many times falter and even fall, so fierce are the onslaughts made upon it. For the Master Himself has often fought interior conflicts far more severe than ours, even though there was no possibility of sin on His part; and He knows by actual experience how savage and tireless are the

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

forces of the flesh when Satan uses them to break down our wills.

And especially to be feared are those attacks against the will that arise from discouragement, from the heaviness and frequency of the sorrows and trials that God permits us to suffer. These attacks are the more formidable because they are so insidious, so deadening in their influence. There is in them no temptation to will or desire or think anything openly and positively evil. The Divine "thou must not" does not strike so strongly upon the ears in these trials, because often the attention of the soul is so taken up by the trial itself that it does not hear so keenly the call to resistance, nor can it see so clearly the dangers of non-resistance. The temptation seems almost harmless. We are urged by our weary, strife-torn nature simply to give up, to let our sorrows, our reverses force us back.

But then, once we yield, we are quickly

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

whirled into the current of sin. Our first step backward shows us more clearly the enormity of our failure to obey the voice of the Creator, urging us always to watch and pray, always to bear up bravely under our afflictions, even when we see no relief before us, no advantage in continuing the struggle any longer.

How often our Saviour has fought in conflicts of this kind, God alone knows. For He only has heard the countless prayers poured forth on these occasions by His Divine Son, prayers that rose to the starry heavens from many a spot hallowed by the lonely presence of the Master: from the house-top of Nazareth, from the field and mountain-side, from the lake-shore and the bank of the Jordan, from the desert of temptation, and at last from the garden of agony—Gethsemane.

If we would see an example of obedience rendered under the most adverse circumstances; if we would witness the most formi-

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

dable effort ever made by Satan to thwart the will of God, the fiercest interior struggle ever fought, the most glorious victory ever won on the battle-ground of the soul, the most perfect and complete submission ever given to the Father, we must go in spirit to Mount Olivet and there contemplate the beginning of our Lord's Passion, His agony and prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

It is growing late in the evening of the first Holy Thursday. Twelve men pass silently through a gate in the eastern wall of Jerusalem. They descend the slope of Mount Moriah, cross the little bridge over the brook Cedron, and then go a short distance up the base of Mount Olivet. They reach a garden called Gethsemane and then pause. By the light of the moon we can see that the party consists of Jesus and eleven apostles. The face of our Lord is pale and drawn. A look of sadness fills His eyes as He turns to His followers, tells Peter, James and John to accompany Him, and

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

then goes a few steps further till He comes to the entrance of a sort of grotto or cave. Here He leaves the chosen three, enters alone and begins to pray.

Often before, in the silence of the night, He has come to this same spot, and many an hour of fervent supplication has been spent here. But all the fervor of former prayers cannot equal the intensity of the petition He now pours forth; nor can all the sorrows of His previous life bear any comparison with the great grief that now almost overwhelms Him. "He began to fear and to be heavy—to grow sorrowful and to be sad."

Let us go down into the grotto and watch the agony of our Lord. In the intensity of His sorrow and the fervor of His supplication, He has fallen flat upon the ground. There, prostrate, with His sacred face pressed to the earth, He prays to His heavenly Father. In the dim light that comes through the entrance to the grotto,

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

we can barely see His form outstretched before us. At first He lies motionless and silent; the great storm of grief and desolation and sadness is gathering above Him, heavy and low, ready at any moment to break. Outside, the full moon shines with a bright, peaceful light. The leaves of the olive trees are gently stirred by the breeze. No voice is heard in the garden. The three apostles, wearied by the events of the day, have fallen asleep where their Master left them. From the temple-area and the Roman barracks off to the west, come sounds of an activity unusual at this late hour—the clank of armor, the dull thud of heavy footsteps, now and then a command hoarsely given. The Jews and Romans are preparing to seize Jesus.

But, outside of this, the city is silent; the world is silent, oblivious of the one Man sorrowing alone in a far-off corner of Palestine. Just as careless and indifferent are men and women now as they were

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

thirty-three years before, when, in the silence of the night, this same Man of Sorrows came into the world and began the work He is now so soon to finish.

And this indifference is what pains our Lord the most. There He lies alone, and the world He came to save knows Him not. He is willing, most anxious to suffer for men; but oh, how He longs for a little sympathy from them. For three years He has preached and taught all over Judea and Galilee. Thousands have heard the words that fell from His lips. Thousands have thronged about Him and seen the miracles that He wrought and tasted His bounty. The sick and the poor, the orphan and the outcast, the aged and the infirm—all have experienced the effects of His goodness and power. He has worked and prayed for this Jewish people night and day; and now on the morrow they will put Him to death.

The sounds of preparation coming from within the city walls fall upon His ears,

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

and help to call up in His imagination a most clear and terrifying picture of those million forms of suffering that are to be crowded into the next few hours. A shudder passes over His frame. Low moans come from His lips. Beads of perspiration spring from Him—are they perspiration? Look closer. They are dark and thick. It is blood that comes from every pore of His sacred body, and falls to the ground. “And his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.” So great a grief no man ever suffered.

And why should He endure this agony for so ungrateful a world? What good, He asks Himself, has all My love effected? Not one man in a million cares for Me and My sorrow. Humanity spurns My proffered help, and goes about its business unmindful of Me. Oh, but the future, does not that hold some consolation for Him? Will not men in after years make amends

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

for all this suffering by their love and devotion? No, He is denied even this. For lo, the veil is lifted from the future. He looks down the long vista of years to come. The centuries unroll themselves before Him. Generation after generation passes before His eyes. He sees the world of all time and space outstretched before Him. And what does all this reveal? Ingratitude, coldness, yea, even contempt. He sees the sins of all ages to come. Every human being passes by Him in that awful hour, the countless multitudes of the sons of man. And each one bears in his arms a burden, the foul burden of sin; and as He passes our Lord, he places this hideous mass on the back of the prostrate Saviour pressing the sacred countenance still closer to the ground. And the Divine Victim knows each creature as he hurries on, and feels each single sin of the millions that rest upon Him. He sees His sacred body trampled under foot, He hears His holy

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

name uttered blasphemously on the streets, He sees the sacrilegious sinner receiving Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin, He sees the great majority of mankind thoughtless of eternity, busied only about this life. And these are the creatures for whom He is suffering, for whom on the morrow He is to die. No wonder the cry bursts from Him: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Weighed down by agony and desolation of mind, He thinks of His apostles. At least with them He will find consolation. He rises, goes out into the garden, and sees His friends and companions from whom He expected comfort and sympathy lying asleep on the ground. The moonlight falling upon Him weaves a crown of silver about that sacred brow which to-morrow a crown of thorns shall pierce. He stands silent, gazing at the prostrate forms. And

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

then from His lips fall the tenderly spoken, burning words of reproach, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldst thou not watch one hour with me?" But now, even now when His own sorrow is almost breaking His heart, He has time to think of their spiritual safety; He fears for them, "Why sleep you? Arise, pray, lest you enter into temptation."

"And going away again, he prayed, saying the same words." The conflict is renewed, raging still more violently, for now He knows that even His chosen disciples are unconscious of His struggle, unable to share His sorrow. He must bear it alone. The thought almost overwhelms Him. Again He comes forth from the grotto, and again He finds His apostles sinking into slumber. A third time He leaves them, and a third time He prays.

And now, at last, the victory is won. Slowly the storm of strife subsides. Resignation writes its imprint on His features.

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

A holy calm comes over His sacred countenance. The drops of blood cease to flow from his body. He becomes perfectly quiet, remains prostrate a few moments longer, "My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done." And with the last words of this prayer on His lips, "thy will be done," He rises slowly and walks with firm step to His apostles: "Sleep ye now, and take your rest. It is enough: the hour is come; behold the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go. Behold, he that will betray me is at hand."

And so to us also does the Master speak, "rise up, let us go." Would that we could heed these words, and rise with a firm will and a strong heart, and go to meet the enemy, as He did, with the words, "thy will be done," upon our lips. But not always are we thus prepared for the trials that affect our outer life. Rather do we often flee from the conflict; or even, in the

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

presence of the foe, deny our allegiance, as St. Peter did, because he failed to watch and pray, but slept, while His Master fought out the interior battle that brought Him victory.

And unless we watch and pray and wage within us the warfare that often tries the souls of men, we cannot expect to act with the obedience that alone will make us brave in the visible battles of life. And this interior warfare is hidden, as our Lord's was, from all eyes save the Father's. If the secrets of hearts were revealed, if the souls of God's creatures were bared to our eyes, how many an hour of agony would they tell us about, how many a battle-field would lie before us with its eloquent traces of the conflicts fought between the will and the lower nature—sad struggles that up to now had been hidden by the calm brow of resignation and the clear gaze of hope and the cheery word and bright smile forced bravely forth from a loving and considerate

OBEDIENCE TO GOD

heart that sought to spare others the sight of a combat that God alone could help them sustain.

Alone with the Master, prostrate by His side in our Gethsemane, we must fight thus many a time ere the will that is so weak, and yet so proud of its liberty, can be brought to subjection. We are alone, our friends cannot help us as we wish to be helped; yet our Model also was alone: "I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and I found none."

And the struggle lasts so long. It seems as if God does not hear our prayer for strength to submit with resignation to His will, for strength to do what He commands when the flesh fights against it, and enemies oppose it, and even friends disapprove of it. But yet, Jesus "being in an agony prayed the longer." The greater His suffering and the longer it lasted, the more fervently did He pray.

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

“And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.” God the Father sent His angel to strengthen the human nature of His Divine Son; and that same Father watches over our efforts to yield obedience to His law. And He will send an angel to us also. He will send us His grace, His all-sufficient help. With this we may feel certain of a final victory, that natural powers alone could not win. If only we take the one, indispensable step, try earnestly to bend our wills to His, we may look to Him for the rest. He will soften our hearts that have been so hard, enlighten our minds that have been so dark, and turn seeming defeat into glorious triumph. For has not He Himself said. “an obedient man shall speak of victory?” And then at last shall we come forth from our garden of desolation and conflict, with the Master’s peace in our souls, and on our lips His words of perfect obedience, “thy will be done.”

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